

REMARKS

This is in full and timely response to the above-identified Office Action.

Claim Status

Claims 1 - 44 are pending in this application;

Claims 16 – 18, 42 - 44 are allowed;

Claims 1, 8-9, 19-20, 22, 25 and 35 are amended in this response; and

Claims 45 - 47 are newly added.

Telephonic Conference

In a telephonic conference with Examiner Charles on Thursday August 7, 2003, it was determined that amendments to claim 1 which would define the shape of the claimed reinforcing ring over that of element 15 shown in Jones '019, would overcome the rejection under 35 § 102(b). Because the reinforcing ring is annular, it was agreed that the concave shape should be clarified to be profiles by making it clear that they were seen in cross-section – viz., cross-sectionally concave. Applicant has included in claim 1 a recitation of only the outer profile surface, inasmuch as that suffices to differentiate over the shape of the reinforcing ring of Jones '019.

Claim Amendments

Claims 8 and 9 have been amended to obviate the use of "or" and to use the conventional "one of A and B" format. Claims 20, 22 25 and 35 have been amended to overcome the rejections under 35 USC § 112, second paragraph by changing the dependency of claims 19 and 20 to depend from claim 2, thus providing antecedent basis for "the lateral flanks". Claim 22 has been amended to provide antecedent basis for "the surfaces", while claim 25 has been amended to delete the phrase "at this location." Claim 35 has also been amended to overcome the antecedent basis problem noted in the rejection.

New Claims

New claims 45-47 are presented for examination. These claims find full support in the specification and drawings as originally filed. These claims are also believed to define patentable subject matter. Claim 45 depends from claim 1 and is allowable for that reason alone. Claim 45 calls for the radially outer ring to be adapted to have a rope run thereover and to apply rope load thereto, and for the reinforcing ring to have a structural rigidity sufficient to effectively attenuate rope load induced flexure thereof and thus prevent local deformation of the radially inner ring. Support for this claiming can be found, by way of example, on page 3, lines 9-22 and page 7 last paragraph.

Claims 46 and 47 are independent claims in which certain structural parameters (material, shape and thickness) are set forth in terms of performance criteria, in the case of claim 47 in mean-plus-function format, so as to "structuralize" the limitations relating to the reinforcing ring being so dimensioned and arranged as to distribute rope load substantially uniformly over the inner ring. Thus, these recitations cannot be ignored as being merely functional statements, because they properly define physical parameters. (Of course, the law in any event requires that "every word in a patent claim must be considered in determining patentability.") Moreover, it is clear that the reinforcing ring of Jones '019 is designed only to prevent circumferential stretching and consequently is not disclosed as having a rigidity, three dimensional form and/or thickness that is sufficient to achieve the advantages disclosed and claimed for the present invention.

It is respectfully submitted that these additional claims require that a structure which has the physical characteristics necessary to perform the recited functions be clearly disclosed in the art in order to meet the claims. Jones '019 does not disclose, teach or suggest such a structure.

Rejections under 35 USC 102

It is respectfully submitted that amendments have been made to claim 1 which overcome the rejection under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Jones'019. This

amendment of claim 1 also overcomes the rejection of claims 2-3, 6-11, 14-15, 21, 24-25, 36 and 38.

Rejections under 35 USC § 103

The rejections of claims 4-5, 12, 13, 26, 27-28, 31, 39, and 40-41 under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Jones'019 either alone or in combination with other references, are deemed rendered moot by the anticipation rejection of claim 1 being overcome, inasmuch as the secondary references do not cure and were not cited as curing the deficiencies noted above in Jones '019.

Conclusion

It is respectfully submitted that all of the claims rejected in this Office Action are now in condition for allowance, along with the newly added claims, those claims which stand allowed and those which have been indicated as containing allowable subject matter.

Respectfully submitted,

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